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Madia, Falkow Facilitate UCLA Social Work Project

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Inglewood Police Lt. James Madia recalls working emergency response on a fire at a high-rise senior citizens complex, and the challenges that came with the event.

Along with responding to the fire, there was the added hurdle of evacuating elderly tenants while ensuring their health and relocation needs were met. A community services representative who worked with the police on that fire showed Madia the worth of social work.

"Social workers are advocates for the community," Madia said recently. "There are a broad range of things they do for the community in support of government."

Madia, who graduated from the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) in December 2011, and current student Michael Falkow have teamed with UCLA's Luskin School of Public Affairs for a community engagement project involving 26 graduate students. Madia heads the Inglewood Police Department's Emergency Response Team while Falkow is the assistant city manager in the Southern California city.

The project focuses on the role of social workers in emergency preparedness and disaster response while exploring common areas where social work, government and the homeland security enterprise intersect. Students were divided into five groups and by the end of the academic term each group will develop a report to the Inglewood City Council on a disaster/emergency planning issue and its funding needs.

"In my mind, somewhere along the lines these roads must coalesce in a manner that is beneficial," Falkow said. "This project we are doing is going to explore the fundamentals of e-prep (emergency preparation) at the community level."

Course instructor Adrienne Sears, who sits on the city's Citizen Police Oversight Commission, enlisted the pair to assist in teaching the course. Sears and Falkow sketched out the course objectives over lunch.

"I wanted to bring reality into the classroom," Sears said. "It's one thing to talk about municipal issues, public safety concerns and citizen needs, but bringing two experts with their vast knowledge and hands-on experience into the classroom for my students to see what it's like in the real world brings a whole new dimension to the educational experience."

This collaboration brings a previously untapped resource in the homeland security enterprise: social work. Madia and Falkow agree social workers are a crucial component of emergency planning. Madia's interest in this aspect of security was heightened by course readings on the concepts of social capital. With budgets tightening, maximizing social capital is critical.

"Social capital has become more important than ever," Madia said. "In order to solve emerging problems, we're going to have to tap everyone."

Social workers have a distinct perspective to bring to emergency planning, Falkow believes, and have the potential to identify needs elected officials may not realize from their own perspectives.

"In my capacity as assistant city manager I see how communities do not invest sufficiently in disaster planning," Falkow said. "Working in the field of social welfare makes someone uniquely prepared to know communities from



the bottom up."

Falkow and Madia have facilitated presentations to students that included tours of city hall and demonstrations of police department assets. They will continue to mentor them throughout the academic term. Both said their CHDS experience was helpful, both course content and the collaborative approach nurtured at the Center.

"Because CHDS is so multi-disciplinary and it has all the players at the table to solve complex problems, I realized social work was an important part of homeland security," Madia said. "The general approach of looking at multi-disciplinary solutions really helped me see my role as facilitator in this UCLA program and helped me with about how I would deliver the material."

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